

Series – Romans: The Life of Faith, The Power of Grace.
Sermon: “No Excuses – Part 1 (The unbeliever) Romans 1:18-23
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We are returning to our Summer in Rome series today. We are going through Paul’s letter to the Romans and we learned last week that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation and for living righteously.

The Gospel is good news. This is why we who have believed the gospel and received Jesus as our Savior, never outgrow the gospel. We have got to stay focused on it so we can live in the power of the gospel and seize the opportunities to share it with other people as God directs.

It is good news and it is the power of God to rescue us from God’s righteous wrath that is being, and ultimately will be, poured out on the godlessness and wickedness of those who refuse to receive the way God provides for our salvation and living.

Today we are looking at 1:18-23 where we read about the wrath of God that is being revealed and learn that there are no excuses for us not to turn to the Lord to receive His mercy and forgiveness. Not even the excuse that “I never heard about...” will be available as we shall see.

We don’t often like to think about God’s wrath. We prefer to think about how loving God is or how compassionate. But I think it is important for us to understand that His wrath is also an act of compassion and justice.

Let me give you an example. On September 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in an act of evil and wickedness perpetrated by a terrorist organization that was led by Osama bin Laden.

In May 2011, our military was able to catch up with Osama, the leader of that terrorist organization. Now what if we had caught up with Osama bin Laden and cornered him and we said, “Listen, what you organized and orchestrated and carried out against our country and all the families who lost loved ones was wicked and evil. Don’t do that again.” And then we left, would you be ok with that?

No. There would be no compassion for the families in seeking justice for this act of wickedness. We would think that the lack of justice would be wicked, which I would agree. There was no remorse from bin Laden, no repentance from his acts. And while the Scriptures tells us that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor should we, the Scripture also confirms that justice brings joy to the righteous and terror to those who do evil. The wrath of the U.S. being poured out on evil to execute justice is not a

bad thing and it can be an act of compassion toward those who have been impacted by this evil.

In a similar way, when God looks down on all the evil and the causes of evil in this world, he does become angry and his wrath being poured out is an act of compassion toward all of those who have been affected by this evil and His wrath is justice toward those who follow the path of evil.

Notice that in verse 18 we are told that God's wrath is being revealed against ungodliness. Ungodliness is living without concern for God. This does not mean a person is an atheist. It could be, but this just means that you live and act as if He did not exist. When we live as if there is no God, doing whatever we want, then evil abounds. Secondly, we are told that God's wrath is against unrighteousness (wickedness), here meaning a person is living without concern for others. This means that we live without caring how our words or actions will harm other people. We care only about ourselves and how things affect us.

So God's wrath is against living without concern for Him or others which is what ultimately has caused so much evil and devastation in the world. It is interesting to note that living without concern for God and man is exactly the opposite of what Jesus said are the 2 greatest commands. He said "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Everything depends on that. If we were to love God and love people, everything else would fall into place.

However, when we live godlessly and wickedly, in total disregard for God and others, everything falls apart in our world and evil dominates. Of course God is angry at that because it is not what He designed it to be, but with choices comes consequences.

From the very beginning, there has been choice. Adam and Eve had a choice. People today have a choice. It is their bad choices that lead to this godlessness and wickedness.

There are certain things that God has written upon everyone's heart. Now these things can ultimately become distorted and perverted in people's rejection of God and their pursuit of sin, but there are still traces of it that are prevalent in every society on earth. No matter where you go, we find that killing someone for no reason is wrong and will bring consequences. Lying without reason is considered wrong by everyone. (stealing, dishonoring parents..)

God has revealed himself to man plainly and yet there are people who choose to reject Him and say there really is no God. Verse 21 - "their thinking becomes futile and their foolish hearts [are] darkened." Or sometimes, people will not completely reject the idea of a god, but instead people choose to replace the true God with false gods. **Read verses 22-23.**

They may recognize that there is a god, but they refuse to believe in a holy, personal God who will judge sin and mankind and so they make up their own gods, who will not judge people, who accepts all that a person does and will think just like them. We basically give ourselves license to do whatever we please with no consequences.

The reality is that we will all stand before a Holy God and there will be no excuses for not believing in Him because He has made the knowledge that there is a God plain to all people.

Ok, so here is the question that everyone will always ask. What about the person who never hears about Jesus? Do they have an excuse? To us human folk, that seems like a good excuse, except for the fact that it totally removes the power and control of God from the situation.

Let's suppose there is a man who is in a remote African village or.... **Read v. 19-20.** We know that God has revealed himself through Creation and in man's conscience and he can choose to accept the reality of a holy and personal God or reject and/or replace that. Let's say the man accepts that there is a holy and personal God who is the creator and judge of the universe. Is he saved? No. Scripture teaches us that it is through Jesus that a person comes to salvation.

Jesus says "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". Peter says in Acts 4 - Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Then how is this man without excuse if this is all that God reveals to Him? Because it is not all that God will reveal to him, if He is faithful with what God does reveal to him.

This is where we need to know and understand God's heart as we also recognize the truth of His word. Scripture tells us in 1 Timothy 2:4, God "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

And we know, as Romans 5:8 tells us that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." So God's desire is to see people saved and He has given the greatest sacrifice for mankind to see that people have the opportunity to be saved.

But a person will never believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He is God in the flesh and that He died and rose again, if they cannot even believe that there is one true and holy God who is creator of all things and will judge sin and ungodliness and unrighteousness in this world.

So will there be people that die without ever hearing the name of Jesus? Yes. But they will stand before God with no excuses because they will have failed to be faithful with even the little that God made plain to them about Himself.

What are you relying on when you meet God? Do you have excuses as to why you

have not received Christ? “But I was a good person” or “But I really did not know” or “But I was just waiting for the right time.” If you are hoping for some excuse or escape clause that allows you into heaven, there is none.

Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6:2 that “now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” It is only through the grace of God that is received by faith in Him and the way He has provided through His Son, Jesus Christ, that a person will be saved.

The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. Do you believe? Have you received Jesus as Savior? And if you have, have you shared this good news, this Gospel, with others who need salvation? This good news is the only hope for everyone. There are no other excuses. In Jesus. Amen.